

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION
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KATE McKENNA, AICP
Executive Officer

DATE: December 6, 2010

TO: Chair and Members of the Formation Commission

FROM: Kate McKenna, AICP, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: **AMBAG “BLUEPRINT” REPORT**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Commission:

- Receive a presentation from the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG) on the draft report “Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area: A Blueprint for Sustainable Growth and Smart Infrastructure” and
- Authorize the Chair to execute a comment letter (Attachment 1) to AMBAG.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT:

Overview

AMBAG has issued a public draft of the Regional Blueprint Report for the three-county Monterey Bay area. Attachment 2 contains excerpts of the report; the full plan can be viewed online. Attachment 1 is a draft comment letter. The Commission will receive a presentation on the report and may authorize comments. The AMBAG Board will consider adopting the report in February.

Background

Over the past year, AMBAG has worked with a technical committee, including LAFCO staff, to refine preliminary drafts of the Blueprint report. LAFCO's Executive Officer has also had several one-on-one meetings with AMBAG's Executive Director, John Doughty, to discuss the report and LAFCO issues. Mr. Doughty provided the Commission (in April 2010) with an introduction to the Regional Blueprint process and to the Sustainable Communities Strategy process, and received informal comments from the Commission.

LAFCO's Relationship to the Blueprint Planning Process and the Sustainable Communities Plan

The Regional Blueprint is a voluntary, Caltrans grant-driven process in which LAFCO has no formal role. However, it will be a foundation for AMBAG's development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy required to implement State Senate Bill 375 (Steinberg). The Sustainable Communities Strategy will influence regional transportation plans and be a platform for future regional housing needs and housing elements. LAFCO has state-mandated responsibilities as part of the Sustainable Communities Strategy. Because of these links, it is important that LAFCO participate in both AMBAG processes.

The role of LAFCO in the creation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy is prescribed by two State requirements. First, a metropolitan planning organization (AMBAG) must "consider Spheres of Influence" in the preparation of a Sustainable Communities Strategy. Second, a LAFCO must consider a regional transportation plan in its review of a proposal for a change of organization or reorganization. These State requirements link the Sustainable Communities Strategy with LAFCO's state-mandated responsibilities to encourage the orderly formation, growth, and development of local government agencies, to preserve open space and prime agricultural land, to discourage urban sprawl, and to efficiently provide local government services.

The November 2010 Public Release Draft Blueprint

Attachment 2 is the Blueprint's Executive Summary and information on Blueprint Priority Areas, including a map. The document discusses current growth patterns in the Monterey Bay Area, presents alternative sustainable growth patterns, and outlines how regional and local public policies can increase housing and transportation choices. Sustainable growth patterns and best practices outlined in the document aim to lessen urban sprawl, protect farmland, reduce greenhouse gasses, lessen regional water usage and save public infrastructure expenditures. Most of the policies in the Blueprint are consistent with LAFCO policies.

The Blueprint recommends focusing development in areas that are rich in jobs and adjacent to high quality transit corridors. In Monterey County, these "Blueprint Priority Areas" are specifically defined as "areas within one half mile of proposed transit stops for the Monterey Salinas Transit future bus rapid transit line and Transportation Agency of Monterey County's proposed light rail project and areas identified in City and County general plans as allowing 15

dwelling units/acre or higher, as well as high density commercial and industrial areas.” Areas were excluded from this designation if they fell within an open space, agricultural or conservation easement or if they did not fall within at least one of the following: a transit corridor, city boundary, a Sphere of Influence or in a potential annexation area.” This definition is included on page 27 of the document. The Blueprint Priority Areas are mapped on page 28 (see Attachment 2).

In his April 2010 presentation to the Commission, AMBAG Executive Director Doughty stated that areas designated for growth contained more land than needed to meet population projections. The draft Blueprint does not direct growth to any specific area of the County, but encourages housing and mixed-use construction adjacent to employment centers and transit corridors. The draft Blueprint is broadly based on local General Plans and states that a sustainable growth pattern can be implemented through the willingness of the region’s communities to plan collaboratively. The document acknowledges that two major constraints to housing development are an adequate water supply and the need to preserve important agricultural land.

The complete November 2010 Public Release Draft (48 pages), and technical appendices, can be downloaded from the AMBAG website at:

<http://www.ambag.org/programs/blueprint/blueprint/index.html>.

The Draft Comment Letter

Attachment 1 is a draft comment letter to AMBAG. It confirms the general consistency of most of the Blueprint’s policies with LAFCO policies. It requests two minor clarifications regarding the definition and designation of Blueprint Priority Areas.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

The Commission may modify, delete or add to the draft comment letter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kate McKenna, AICP
Executive Officer

cc: John Doughty, Executive Director, AMBAG

Attachment:

1. Draft Comment Letter
2. November 2010 Public Release Draft Blueprint, Executive Summary and pages 27 - 29

Attachment 1

LAFCO of Monterey County

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KATE McKENNA, AICP
Executive Officer

----- **DRAFT** -----

December 6, 2010

John Doughty, Executive Director
Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments
445 Reservation Road
Marina, CA 93933

RE: The Public Release Draft of *"Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area: A Blueprint for Sustainable Growth and Smart Infrastructure."*

Dear Mr. Doughty:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on *"Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area: A Blueprint for Sustainable Growth and Smart Infrastructure."* We also wish to thank you for your presentations in April and December 2010.

The Public Release Draft document includes a number of policies that are generally consistent with LAFCO policies and legislative purposes. These include sustainable growth patterns and best practices that would lessen urban sprawl, protect farmland, reduce greenhouse gasses, lessen regional water usage and save public infrastructure expenditures.

The Commission understands that *"Envisioning Monterey Bay"* is designed as a basis for the development of the Sustainable Communities Strategy required to implement State Senate Bill 375. While LAFCO has no statutory role in the Blueprint planning process, our staff has provided input as a member of a technical advisory committee. The role of LAFCO in the creation of the Sustainable Communities Strategy is prescribed by State requirements: 1) that a metropolitan planning organization "consider Spheres of Influence" in the preparation of a sustainable communities strategy, and 2) that a LAFCO consider a regional transportation plan in its review of a proposal for a change of organization or reorganization. These State

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requirements link the Sustainable Communities Strategy with LAFCO's state-mandated responsibilities to encourage the orderly formation, growth, and development of local government agencies, to preserve open space and prime agricultural land, to discourage urban sprawl, and to efficiently provide local government services.

In anticipation of the planning process for the Sustainable Communities Strategy, and LAFCO's role in that process, we offer the following minor comments relating to the "Blueprint Priority Areas":

- Please remove the term "potential annexation area" from the definition of a "Blueprint Priority Area," (page 27): The definition of a Blueprint Priority Area expressly excludes areas that are not within "at least one of the following: a transit corridor, city boundary, a Sphere of Influence *or in a potential annexation area.*" While a transit corridor, a city boundary and a Sphere of Influence are all either defined in the document or State law, there is no definition of a "potential annexation area." As an area must be located within a City's Sphere of Influence prior to being approved for annexation, it is redundant to define a separate "potential annexation area."
- Please clarify the exceptions made by AMBAG to designate two "locally proposed projects" as Blueprint Priority Areas (see map, page 28): The Blueprint states that "two exceptions have been made for locally proposed projects in Gonzales and King City that do not currently meet the Priority Area criteria with the understanding that these areas will meet those criteria through local planning processes as well as the pertinent LAFCO process." Please make it clear that AMBAG's Priority Area designations for these two areas are contingent upon local planning and LAFCO approvals.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide comments. Executive Officer Kate McKenna is available to meet with AMBAG staff for more detailed discussions and assistance.

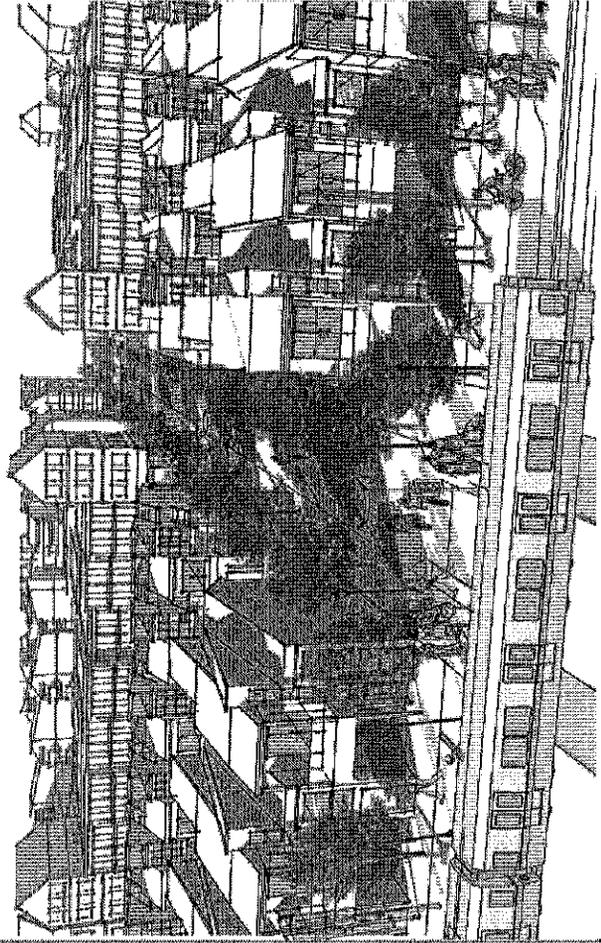
Sincerely,

Don Champion, Ph.D.
Chair

ENVISIONING THE MONTEREY BAY AREA Executive Summary

"In 2035 I want to live in an area that has more mixed age and income neighborhoods and more public transportation, while preserving the open spaces that we currently have."

Resident, Monterey Bay Area



Source: AMBAG, 2010

Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area is a blueprint for the future describing how the communities of the Monterey Bay Area might grow in a sustainable fashion over the next 25 years. As such, this document focuses on meeting the growth challenges of the coming years through expanded housing and transportation choices for residents of the Monterey Bay Area.

By providing more of both kinds of choices, between single-family homes and townhouses, and between cars, transit, biking and walking, the region can also make fiscally sound decisions about infrastructure. Given limited and shrinking resources, our decisions about the future require making trade-offs among all of those choices.

This document, and the Technical Appendices available through the AMBAG web site, summarizes two years of joint fact finding involving regional agencies, special use districts, local governments and the public and concludes with some recommended policies for regional and local governments.

Building on findings from AMBAG's official 2008 forecast of population, housing and employment and other research, AMBAG and its partners compare current conditions to potential future outcomes. Relying on the forecast for basic assumptions, AMBAG anticipates slow to moderate population growth with even slower job growth over the next 25 years."

Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area is about expanding housing and transportation choices. Given limited and shrinking resources, it is also about making trade-offs.

Another key finding from the forecast is that, consistent with national trends, the population of the Monterey Bay Area is aging. Compounded with a potentially sprawling future pattern of growth, these trends will increase congestion and greenhouse gas emissions and the fiscal gaps between infrastructure needs and its provision will widen.

Building on a series of “what if” kinds of questions and using sophisticated modeling techniques, AMBAG has developed a potential alternative to the forecasted current growth pattern, called the Sustainable Growth Pattern.

What does a more Sustainable Growth Pattern look like?

Fewer people would be driving alone in their cars, and stuck on the highways. More people would be out on the streets walking, biking and taking transit to work, school and play.

More active neighborhood centers where people can easily walk or bike from home to restaurants, work, school, community centers and parks.

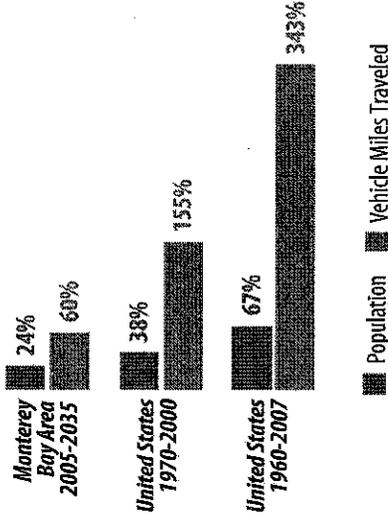
Smarter neighborhood design that focuses on walkable, bikeable streets and commercial and housing densities that can support high quality transit services.

Both the Current Growth Pattern and the Sustainable Growth Pattern are broadly consistent with local General Plans. Those plans are flexible enough for growth to occur as forecasted or more sustainably. The difference between the two depends on a willingness among the region’s communities to plan collaboratively on specific goals.

Working with local governments and other agencies, as well as with the general public, Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area lays out a regional

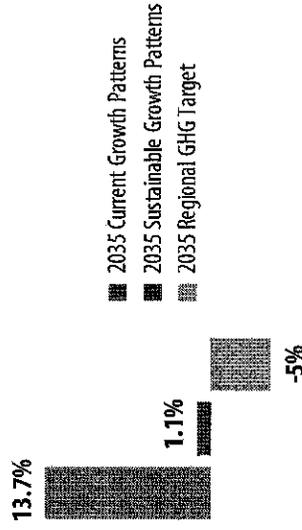
Population vs. VMT Growth

Monterey Bay Area 2005-2035; United States 1970-2000 and 1960-2007
 Source: AMBAG, Monterey Bay Area 2008 Regional Forecast; AMBAG Regional Travel Demand Model; Federal Highway Administration; US Census Bureau



Percent Change in Daily Per Capita Greenhouse Gas Emissions from cars and light trucks from 2005 in the Monterey Bay Area

Source: AMBAG, Monterey Bay Area 2008 Regional Forecast; AMBAG Regional Travel Demand Model; California Air Resources Board



*Demographic and employment information in this document is drawn from the official Monterey Bay Area 2008 Regional Forecast, produced by AMBAG and adopted by the AMBAG Board of Directors on June 11, 2008.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area presents a regional vision for the communities of Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties. It is a blueprint for both "smart growth" and "smart infrastructure."

As adopted by the AMBAG Board of Directors in March of 2009, cities in the Blueprint terminology have since been added by AMBAG staff and Blueprint Policy Group members.

The Blueprint is the first regional effort to sustain a coordinated vision of the future in the Monterey Bay Area. Staff from regional and local agencies in the tri-county area developed four overarching goals in consultation with one another to guide the Blueprint planning process. On March 11th 2009 the AMBAG Board of Directors adopted the following goals:

1. Evaluate current trends regarding the distribution of population and employment in comparison with:
 - Improving mobility & accessibility
 - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
 - Providing housing & employment opportunities
 - Protecting natural & cultural resources
2. Develop a preferred growth scenario that maximizes the achievement of these outcomes while retaining the autonomy of local jurisdictions
3. Use the preferred growth scenario as a basis for SB 375's Sustainable Communities Strategy, which will be used to inform regional transportation plans and to be a platform for future regional housing needs and housing elements
4. Provide a forum for ongoing discussions and coordination of issues of regional significance

The specific effort of developing a Blueprint for the Monterey Bay Area includes the following steps:

1. Through joint fact finding in an inter-agency setting, accomplish Goal 1
2. With public feedback and ongoing fact finding associated with Goal 1, accomplish Goal 2
3. With AMBAG Board of Directors approval and feedback from State agencies, accomplish Goal 3
4. A product of all actions taken by participating parties, this goal is to improve regional communication, tangible products of the effort include the identification of regional and local policies that implement Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area

long-range strategy for attaining this Pattern over the next twenty-five years. This document incorporates feedback from both the public sector and nearly 700 residents from across the region who participated in workshops and on-line surveys over the course of the last year.*

On March 11, 2009, the AMBAG Board of Directors adopted Goals and Objectives for Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area. Those Goals and Objectives are shown on the left. This November 2010 Public Release Draft Document of Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area precedes AMBAG Board of Directors consideration of the final version in February of 2011. Comments received from the public throughout the months of November and December will help complete the final document.

While Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area is not legislatively binding upon the region or local communities, the Blueprint does identify best practices which could be valuable to local governments in their own local planning efforts. Recent State grant opportunities have requested documentation regarding local proposal consistency with an adopted regional Blueprint. Adopting Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area will make the region more competitive for grant funding.

Most importantly, Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area will lay the foundation for the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) for the Monterey Bay Area, which will be adopted in late 2012 or 2013. Each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in California is responsible, pursuant to statute, for developing an SCS that demonstrates how, through more efficient coordination of land use decisions and transportation investments, each region can reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions from cars and light trucks.

The California Air Resources Board adopted regional targets for each metropolitan region on September 30, 2010. The Monterey Bay Area received a fairly modest target of reducing per capita greenhouse emissions levels 5% below 2005 levels by 2035.

Envisioning the Monterey Bay Area is the synthesis of a wide array of data, analysis and public input that will be helpful in preparing the SCS. This strategy will help our region reduce per capita greenhouse emissions. There will be further opportunities for public participation in the development of the SCS over the course of the next two years as part of the long range transportation planning process.

*Full survey results are available in Technical Appendix G.

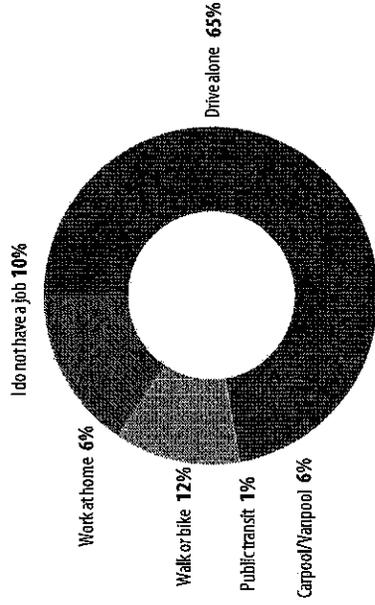


Photo Source: AMBAG.

In the summer and fall of 2010, AMBAG conducted workshops throughout the region, collecting feedback from nearly 700 participants. Detailed results from the workshops and online survey can be found in the Appendix G.

Who Responded to AMBAG's Regional Blueprint Survey?

The majority of survey participants drive alone to work or school everyday.
Source: AMBAG, 2010 Regional Blueprint Survey



Under Sustainable Growth Patterns, the majority of the region's forecasted growth occurs within a comfortable walking distance of mixed use transit and neighborhood centers.

By focusing development in areas that are rich in jobs and adjacent to high quality transit corridors, an increase in transit use, walking, biking, and carpooling will result in significant decreases in vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Ongoing efforts to expand vanpooling for agricultural workers will help reduce VMT and emissions in agricultural areas. Even as the majority of drivers continue to drive their own cars, the overall distances they have to drive will be shorter than Current Growth Patterns because destinations will be more accessible when all development is located closer together.

Blueprint Priority Areas

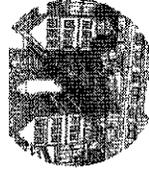
Those job-rich, transit adjacent areas are identified as "Blueprint Priority Areas." More specifically, Blueprint Priority Areas are defined as areas within one half mile of proposed transit stops* for the Monterey Salinas Transit future bus rapid transit line and Transportation Agency of Monterey County's proposed light rail project; potential transit nodes identified by Blueprint Policy Group members in San Benito and Santa Cruz Counties; and areas identified in City and County general plans as allowing 15 dwelling units/acre or higher, as well as higher density commercial and industrial areas.

Areas were excluded if they fell within an open space, agricultural or conservation easement or if they did not fall within at least one of the following: a transit corridor, city boundary, a sphere of influence or in a potential annexation area.

Two exceptions were made, as depicted in the following map for the City of King and Gonzales. These cities are including areas that

* Transit stop locations are pending approval

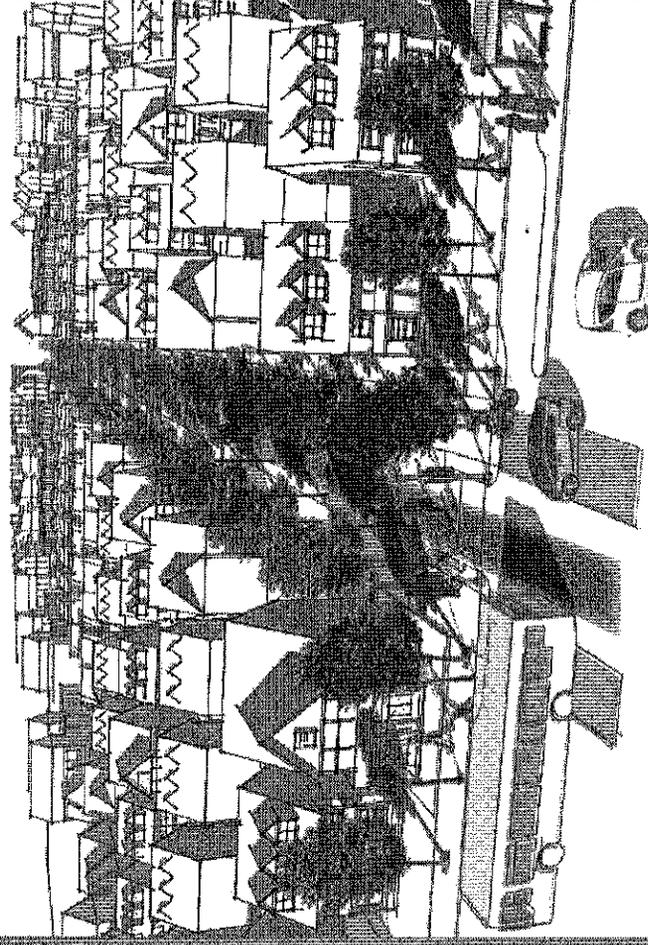
AMBAG defines sustainable to mean that communities can meet present needs without compromising the ability of successive generations to meet their needs



**Residential Neighborhood
Within Walking Distance of a
Transit/Neighborhood Center**

Transit/Neighborhood Center

Conceptual Illustration



8 minute walk

Source: AMBAG, 2010

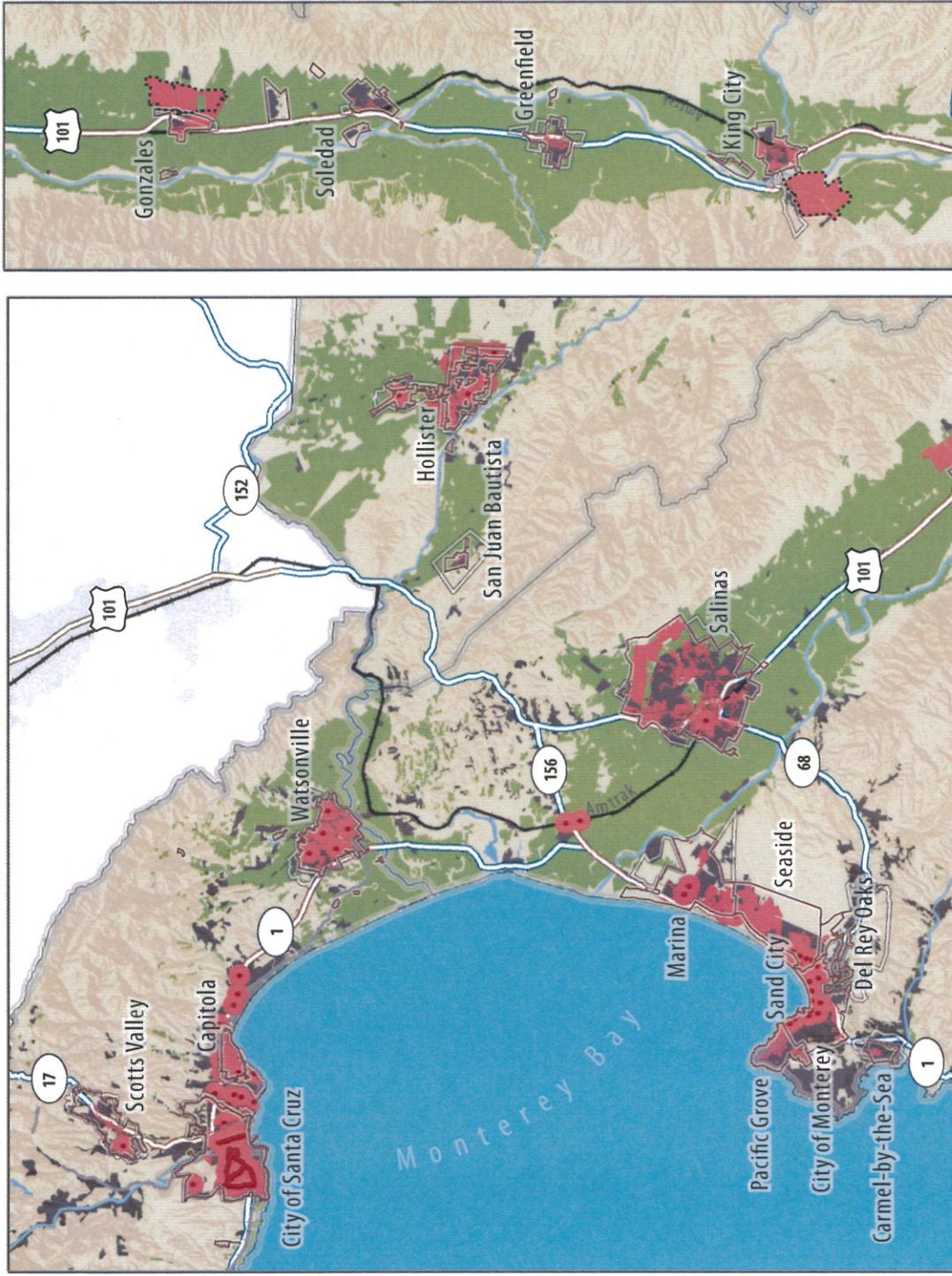
BLUEPRINT PRIORITY AREAS

Source: AMBAG, 2010; CA Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program 2006

NOTE: Blueprint Priority Areas will continue to be revised as AMBAG receives local input. Two exceptions have been made for locally proposed projects in Gonzales and King City that do not currently meet the Priority Area criteria with the understanding that these areas will meet those criteria through local planning processes as well as the pertinent LAFCO process.

LEGEND

-  **Blueprint Priority Areas**
-  Major Development Nodes & Corridors
-  Proposed Local Projects
-  Agricultural Land
-  Urbanized Land
-  City Boundaries
-  Spheres of Influence
-  State Highway
-  Interstate Highway
-  Passenger Rail - Amtrak



-  3/4 mile radius
13 minute walk
Area: 1100 acres
-  1/2 mile radius
10 minute walk
Area: 500 acres
-  1/3 mile radius
8 minute walk
Area: 220 acres

How Big is a Walkable Area?

Key Characteristics: Sustainable Growth Patterns

- Coordinated regional plan for sustainable growth
- Medium to high residential and employment densities in Blueprint Priority Areas while maintaining average densities across the region
- New development with mix of different land uses
- More access to affordable/workforce housing in cities with large employment bases
- Multimodal focused transportation (streets for cars, buses, rail, bike and pedestrians)
- Most employment growth takes places in existing employment clusters
- Little leapfrog development, mostly compact development
- Fiscal variances are tempered by some tax base sharing

What's in a Priority Area Development Note?

Shown here is a conceptual illustration of a Priority Area node where the distance from the center to residential neighborhoods can be comfortably walked in 8 minutes. The housing and commercial densities shown here can support high quality transit service such as light rail and bus rapid transit where the wait time is no more than 15 minutes.

are proposed to be annexed eventually and developed consistent with Priority Area criteria.

Can Blueprint Priority Areas Accommodate the Region's Growth?

Yes, and with plenty of room to spare. Blueprint Priority Areas comprise a total of 44,000 acres - nearly two-thirds the total area of all existing incorporated areas in the region. However, as the majority of Priority Areas are already urbanized, not all of that land can be developed. Accommodating the region's growth within these areas will require smart and compact design that reflects and enhances the character of existing communities.

If 10% of Blueprint Priority Areas or 4,400 acres of land were to accommodate the region's forecasted housing growth of 70,000 new units between 2005 and 2035, that development would have

Priority Area Development Node: Conceptual Illustration

